

Remarks of Joanne Hanley, Superintendent  
National Parks of Western Pennsylvania  
Flight 93 Advisory Commission Meeting

August 2, 2008

Good morning.

My name is Joanne Hanley, and I am the Superintendent of five national park sites in western Pennsylvania. Fort Necessity National Battlefield, Friendship Hill National Historic Site, Allegheny Portage RR National Historic Site, Johnstown Flood National Memorial and Flight 93 National Memorial. These are five out of the 391 national park sites in this country that have been set aside to protect the outstanding beauty, scenery, wildlife, and history of this great nation. As a caretaker, I take my stewardship role seriously.

Today, we are going to have a different kind of National Park Service update and briefing.

Since I am the caretaker and steward here in western Pennsylvania, as well as live here with my family, I think you should know, that you have a right to know, your Superintendent: who she is, her priorities, her allegiances, and her professional and personal feelings about this project.

First, my priorities and allegiances:

1. My number one priority in life is to my Lord and my God;
2. Second, is my family;
3. Third, is to my country;
4. Fourth is my avocation, which is my calling to be a public servant; and manage these special places in America with integrity, honesty and collaboration;
5. Fifth, is my vocation - my day-to-day job - part of which is planning, developing and implementing the Flight 93 National Memorial.

Today, as public servant, I'll talk about where the intersection of country, avocation, and vocation come together.

Folks have tried to threaten, cajole, and intimidate me many times on this project. I have been told over the last three years – that

“you will be destroyed;”

“you are a liar;”

“you will be ruined;”

“we can save your life;” or

“you can be a hero.”

I want to make it clear that my destruction, my ruin, my saving or my heroism does not rest in the hands of these men. My motivation comes from my priorities and allegiances.

And here is what I know about where this project stands; it stands on the truth. Truth does not change; it is not based on changing facts to fit a theory; it is a bedrock.

Here are our truths:

- The project partners took many years to develop a strong relationship and a strong administrative structure for the entire project. Before embarking on a design process, we developed trust.
- We examined many different options for a design process, and together, chose our competition managers, juries, and two-stage international design competition process.
- Every step of the process was open and collaborative among the partners and the public.
- Family members and partners worked shoulder-to-shoulder every step of the way.
- Every step of the process was inclusive, inviting public comment, in an open forum, and honored the democratic value of free speech.
- The majority of Stage 2 jurors voted for the winning design; the jury report shows that every single juror stated he or she would support it.
- The initial design was refined in response to Stage 2 jury comments. The design continues to be refined as we select construction materials, plants, and its orientation and location based on further geotechnical and engineering surveys.
- We have nothing to hide; we are built on a strong foundation.

These truths have not waivered, drifted or changed over the many years. The truth is, our process worked, and the only reason there is any lingering dialogue about the memorial, is because others have tried and continue to try and change the truth.

Over the last three years, folks have tried to penetrate, to attack and to discredit this project from many different angles. Some attempts at the truth had the appearance of being very scholarly and mathematically complex; others are just made-up.

Each penetration has not been successful, so when one truth does not work, another truth has been tried.

For example, I recently learned on a blog the supposed “real reason” that the draglines were sold. This blog stated that they were sold by the Park Service because “the draglines would taint the giant mosque structure”, and “Paul Murdoch got rid of the drag lines, so he could get rid of the American flag, rising up 180 feet behind the giant mihrab.”

Several times at our meetings here in the past, I’ve reported that the reason we are not purchasing the draglines is because of the tremendous costs involved;

- purchase cost of \$800,000;
- initial stabilization cost of \$850,000;
- \$1 million every 15 to 20 years for maintenance;
- \$10,000 every year for 10% of a maintenance workers time and salary

In addition, the family board voted to support selling the draglines. As Superintendent, if I had to prioritize a decision as to how to spend a million dollars on maintenance, it

would probably be on the Sacred Ground, the memorial, and the visitor center, in that order.

Clearly this truth did not work.

Another recent example: the National Park Service's website states that the "circle of embrace follows the topography of the bowl, and is symbolically broken in two places – where the plane went overhead and entered the bowl, and where the plane crashed." Some have cried that the National Park Service has renamed the design the "broken circle" in honor of an al Qaeda, or terrorist, victory.

We believe however, that this circle of embrace and the demarcation of the flight path and the crash site, honors the heroism of the 40 passengers and crew as they fought courageously, over those exact locations, to take back the plane from the hijackers. It marks exactly where the first battle in the war on terror was won.

Clearly, this truth did not work either.

There are many more examples.

We have not waived; we stand on the truth; we have nothing to hide.

Truth:

- This project was started by 40 heroes who loved freedom and democracy; who were patriots.
- This project will be completed by people who love freedom and democracy, who love this country, and who are patriots.
- This is a labor, an avocation and a vocation of love. The will of the families, the partners and the American people will be done.
- I am proud of what we've accomplished; I am proud to be a part of this; and I am proud to be an American.
- Your Superintendent loves this country. I love the ideals, the morals, the truth and the character upon which the founding fathers built this country.
- Thirty years ago, when I embarked on my vocation and avocation, I took an oath, as did all of the Federal Advisory Commissioners sitting here, to defend the Constitution of the United States, so help me God. That oath still stands today, perhaps even burning brighter and stronger.

Thank you.